

# protect your bees

## BeeBase

BeeBase is a FREE online service provided by the National Bee Unit (NBU) to help protect you and your fellow beekeepers from colony threatening pests and diseases.

If there is a disease outbreak in your area, the NBU team uses BeeBase to contact local beekeepers and arrange for precautionary inspections to check for any signs of infection, and to advise on what to do.

BeeBase is also a fantastic source of information on:

- pest and disease recognition and control
- the legislation you need to know
- key contacts in the NBU
- known pest and disease outbreaks through regularly updated interactive maps
- current areas of research into honey bee protection

**Don't put your bees at risk – register on BeeBase**

## How to register

Go online to: [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com)

By email: [nbu@fera.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:nbu@fera.gsi.gov.uk)

By phone: 01904 462510

This leaflet was produced as part of the Healthy Bees Plan.

The Healthy Bees Plan aims to address the challenges facing beekeepers in sustaining the health of honey bees and beekeeping in England and Wales. It has been jointly developed by Governments, beekeepers, their associations and other stakeholders.

For more information on the Healthy Bees Plan visit:

[www.defra.gov.uk/feral/healthbeesplan](http://www.defra.gov.uk/feral/healthbeesplan)

# Beekeeping Essentials



# What beekeepers say

A recent Defra funded study among beekeepers in England and Wales has shown there are three key steps along the road to

learning the art of beekeeping and staying up-to-date with good beekeeping practice.



## Get some training or refresh your skills

Many established beekeepers say that, when starting out, getting the right training and advice is vitally important. They also say that training can help established beekeepers keep up-to-date on best practice techniques and disease management. Talk to your local beekeepers association, who run theory and practical training courses, or contact your local bee inspector.

## Talk to other beekeepers

The research showed that one of the best sources of advice, help and support is experienced beekeepers. So join your local beekeepers association or befriending a local beekeeper. The British Beekeepers Association ([www.britishee.org.uk](http://www.britishee.org.uk)) and the Welsh Beekeepers Association ([www.wbka.com](http://www.wbka.com)) can put you in touch with the right people.

## Register on BeeBase

BeeBase is an invaluable resource for beekeepers that is run by The Food and Environment Research Agency's (Fera) National Bee Unit (NBU). Not only is BeeBase part of the network of information available to help and guide beekeepers, it is also there to help you take the necessary action to protect your colonies from any known disease outbreaks in your area. Once you register, the NBU can alert you to any disease outbreaks and arrange to inspect your colonies if necessary. That way you ensure that the early action necessary to protect your colonies is taken. For more information go to [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com)

# hints and tips

Experience has shown that two aspects of colony management are particularly important in keeping colonies productive - colony husbandry and disease recognition and control. Here are some hints and tips on good practice for both topics.

## Colony husbandry:

- Avoid poor apiary or hive hygiene which allows disease to take a hold and flourish
- Change 2 to 3 combs per year
- Ensure that each colony always has sufficient carbohydrate (honey or sugar) and protein (pollen) as well as access to suitable water sources
- Try to find apiary sites that offer a wide variety of forage for the bees
- Ensure your bees have adequate good quality stores to carry them through the winter
- Try to avoid sourcing bees (particularly queens) from outside your own area. If you do bring bees in from another area make sure they are from a reliable source
- Concentrate on improving your stock – cull the queens which least suit your requirements, breed from those which most suit them



## Disease recognition and control:

- Check for disease each time you examine your colony
- Varroa management is an ongoing task which should be practised throughout the active season, not just in the autumn
- Aim to have healthy bees with minimum varroa levels to go into autumn and winter - they will have a higher chance of surviving winter and helping the queen to raise brood in the new year
- The Fera National Bee Unit brochure "Managing Varroa" gives full details of virtually every effective varroa control technique (download a copy from [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com))
- If you think your bees might have foul brood disease contact your local bee inspector for free diagnosis
- Foul brood (and other brood diseases) can be identified by reference to the Fera National Bee Unit brochure "Foul Brood Disease of Honeybees" (download a copy from [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com))
- Colonies not building up and/or showing signs of dysentery should be checked for *noosema* spp.
- If you have concerns about noosema, consult the Fera National Bee Unit laboratory (01904 462510) or your local beekeepers association microscopist who will help you identify if noosema is present
- More frequently seen diseases such as chalk brood or sac brood should be addressed
- Changing combs can make a big difference in keeping pathogen numbers down and help control chalk brood and sac brood; re-queening from a different strain can often help

